Airbus scores Middle East success with Kuwait A310 order

KUWAIT Airways has ordered six Airbus A310 200-seat widebodies, with deliveries scheduled to start late in 1983. The order represents a significant breakthrough for Airbus into the Middle East market, which is still largely open to both Airbus and Boeing for the big twins. Kuwait Airways is currently an all-Boeing operator.

Kuwait Airways order.

Another important Arab airline order, that from Middle East Airlines, may be influenced by Kuwait’s choice. MEA is close to deciding on a type, or types, to replace its Boeing 707s and 720s. The operator has a requirement for long-haul and medium-haul widebodies—Airbus and Boeing competing strongly for the latter. Total Airbus A310 sales stand at 139 (71 firm and 68 options).

Airline accidents

- The April 13 Transbrasil Boeing 727 crash near Floriapolis Airport (Flight for April 20, page 1174) does not appear to have been caused by any fault in the aircraft. Investigators report that it may have been caused by the airliner’s approach path which was too low and off-course. The aircraft hit a 1,400ft hill about 300ft below its summit during a thunderstorm; 54 people died.
- Soviet press sources report a Yak-40 crash on an unspecified date in mountainous Tadzhikistan in which all people on board were killed. The aircraft was flying from Leninoabad to Dushanbe.
- A Thai Airways BAE 748 veered off the runway at Bangkok’s Chiang Rai Airport during take-off on June 21. Twelve of the 21 persons on board were injured and the aircraft badly damaged when it ran into a ditch; the cause is not yet known.
- At Honolulu on June 15, a Hawaiian Airlines DC-9 “blew an engine” while preparing for take-off, according to agency reports. Of the 131 passengers on board, six suffered cuts and bruises during evacuation and three required hospital treatment.
- An Olympic Airways Airbus A300 en route from Heathrow to Athens on June 17 returned to Heathrow after being struck by lightning over the English Channel. The aircraft is reported to have received several lightning strikes. One engine was severely damaged and the return to Heathrow was made on one engine. There were 176 passengers on board.
- Luanda radio on June 18 broadcast a communiqué from the Transport Minister saying that the TAAG (Angolan airline) Yak-40 which crashed on June 8 had been hit during combat between Angolan Air Force and South African military aircraft.

Italian DC-9 lost off Sicily

A McDonnell Douglas DC-9-10 belonging to Italian domestic carrier Itavia crashed into the Tyrrhenian Sea, some 90 miles north of Palermo, Sicily, during the evening of Friday, June 11, 1982 (77 passengers and four crew) on board are feared dead, as we go to press. A search of the area has located wreckage and bodies floating in the sea. Reports that some bodies were found wearing lifejackets are denied by the airline.

Some of the bodies were found floating some 20 miles from the wreckage.

No distress call was received from the aircraft and the last message received (at 8.57 p.m.) gave the position as some 70 miles west of Naples.

A telephone claim from a terrorist group that one of its members was a target for a bomb, placed on the aircraft by a rival group, has been discounted, although sabotage has not been ruled out.

Tornado into RAF service

The Royal Air Force was due to receive its first Panavia Tornado GR.1 interdictor strike aircraft on July 1, as we went to press. Two aircraft, including a dual-control trainer, were to arrive at the Trinational Tornado Training Establishment (TTTE), RAF Cottesmore, to be formally accepted by Air Vice-Marshall Michael Knight, Air Officer Commanding No 1 Group, RAF Strike Command.

The aircraft will begin a short period of acceptance and compatibility checks before being used to familiarise ground crews from the co-located Tornado Ground Servicing School. All TTTE aircraft will be maintained by RAF crews although there will be a small cadre from Germany and Italy to handle equipment peculiar to their aircraft.

Flying begins later this month using teaching staff trained by MBB at Manching, and will concentrate on creating more instructor crews. Conversion of operational crews is set to begin in January 1981 when the establishment officially opens.

Some 150 crews a year will be trained and the TTTE will be made up eventually of three flying training squadrons (A, B and C), a standardisation squadron and a simulator squadron. Each crew will spend four months at Cottesmore, completing 60hr flying. R AF Tornado F.2 crews will be trained elsewhere.

Training at Cottesmore is to include formation flying, navigation, terrain following and tactics. Weapons training will be a national responsibility. British, German and Italian Tornadoes will be pooled and at the peak of training there will be up to 48 aircraft at Cottesmore. From 1987 the numbers will drop below 30.

Multi-national F-16 on test

Five nations—Belgium, Denmark, The Netherlands, Norway and the United States—are taking part in a six-month trial of the General Dynamics F-16. The second part of the multi-national operational test and evaluation (Mote) examines the operational effectiveness and develops F-16 tactics. The first part of the programme was conducted in the United States.

Four F-16s from Hill Air Force Base, Utah, are at Leeuwarden Air Base in the Netherlands until August 7. From there the F-16s will proceed to Skrydstrup in Denmark, Beuvenchain in Belgium and to Rygge and Bodo in Norway. A total of 122 ground and aircrew from the five nations will accompany the Mote unit. The results of the evaluation and verification of the F-16’s performance and tactics in the European environment will be compiled next year.

Multi-national F-16 on test